September 1998
No. 72

Quarterly Newsletter

⚓ The Australian Association for Maritime History

Publisher of *The Great Circle*

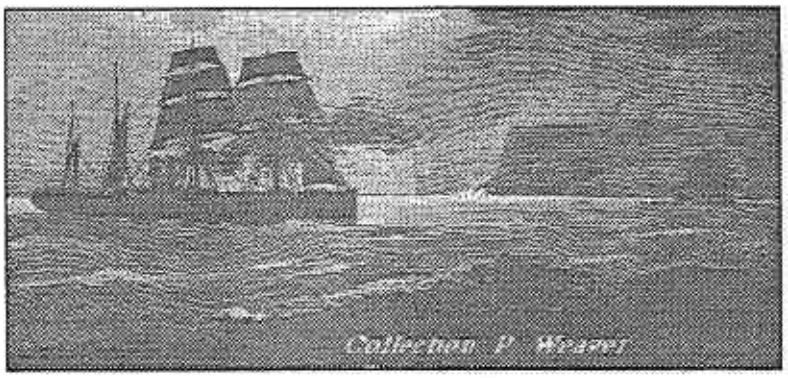
Special : Books rule - OK.

Freedom is the right to tell people what they do not want to hear - George Orwell

Welcome to new members

The President and Executive Committee extend a warm welcome to the following new members:

Mr Martin Carrit, Blacktown
Mr Robert Dick, Sydney
Mr Phillip Evans, Linfield
Mr Robin Ashen, Hunters Hill
Mr Jack Clark, East Lindfield
Mr Ross Newton Smith, Glen Iris
Mr Keith Waterhouse, Waverley
Dr Hamish Foster, Coal Point
The Ford family, Picnic Point
Ms Zenaida Banham, Cooktown
Mr David Wade, Rushcutters Bay
Mr Warwick Birrell, Sydney
Mr Neil Baird, Southbank
Asc. Prof. James Hawkins, Mosman
Mr Sean Iles, Wynnum North
Mr Wayne Shipp, Low Head
Mr R. Chandler, Mt. Tom Price
Mr G. Bellamy, Bacchus Marsh
Lady Jean Foley, St Ives
Capt. David Clarke, Swanbourne
Mr Philip Van Dereyk, Darwin



A 19th century coastal trader off Cape Otway

Apollo Bay & District Historical Society - welcome

The AAMH also welcomes its most recent institutional member. The Apollo Bay & District Historical Society in Victoria runs a small local history museum in the former PMG Mainland to Tasmania Undersea Cable Station (Built in 1936) at Apollo Bay. Amongst other things the group is endeavouring to put together information about the local shipwrecks, the Cape Otway (see above) lightstation, the coast shipping lines that serviced the Victorian west coast, and the local fishing industry. They have a substantial collection of regional photographs which are currently being catalogued. The Society would be delighted to receive from AAMH members any advice on references to coastal shipping lines. Their postal address is PO Box 248, Apollo Bay, Victoria, 3233, and the museum is located at 6250 Great Ocean Rd., Apollo Bay.

Australian Society of Marine Artists - welcome

The Australian Society of Marine Artists have also become members. They will be holding their second Exhibition in the Nortel Gallery at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour, Friday 6th to Friday 20th November 1998. The recently formed Society now has 60 members and anticipates a showing of over 150 paintings, ship models, scrimshaw and sculpture. Whilst celebrating and recording aspects of maritime history and present day use of the sea, many themes will

show the variety of the coast, the ships and ports, shore life, sea life and "*Nauticalia.*" During the Exhibition there will be 4 explanatory talks on the great days of sail, war artists, the great liners and art mediums and techniques; followed by a conducted tour of the show. This year will see the inaugural award of the President's Medal to an outstanding member's work, selected by the members. Enquiries to Dean Claflin. Tel 0 29810 6396 Fax 02 9391 2288

Chinese sourcebook available may be useful to maritime historians

A listing of sources relating to Chinese immigration history and culture in NSW is now available from the authors, F. Young and N, van Barneveld, PO Box 206, Sylvania Southgate, NSW. 2224. *Sources for Chinese Local History and Heritage in New South Wales.* A$14.20 posted anywhere in the world.

Help sought

From time to time the AAMH receives letters requesting assistance with family history research. The AAMH does not maintain any archives or files apart from its own records. However, when space permits we are pleased to pass on such requests to members via the newsletter in the hope that some assistance may be forthcoming:

Mrs J.E. Ross of 11a Cooneys Drive, Matua, Tauranga, New Zealand would like some help on the voyage of the *Sabrina*, which arrived at Morton Bay about 27 November 1855. Mrs Ross's great-grandmother Teresa O'Neil (15) was on board. Was she an orphan? Any information on this passenger or the voyage would be appreciated. Thanks to Mrs Ross for a donation of $10 to the AAMH.

Syd Ryder, 1 Kooyong Ct. Ferny Grove, Qld. 4055 is seeking an image of *Argyle* which came to Morton Bay in 1852.

E.A. Scholer in Newport wants to find when and which ship brought Jacob Frederick Scholer (1844-99) to Australia. Email address is, scholer@newportnet.com

Ocean Week - Ocean Year - freebies

Just after the last issue went to the printers the editor discovered the first week in June was Ocean Week. Not much happened in his neck of the woods, but the ABC did feature some nice music with ocean themes. The International Year of the Ocean rolls on and an information pack with posters and all sorts of other excellent teaching materials is available free by ringing 1800 803 772. There is also a website: http://oceans.ninemsn.com.au. The Australian Wooden Boat Festival offers a free newsletter. Send your details and any particular interests to PO Box 713, Hobart, Tas. 7001. Ph. 03 6231 6407. Check out the item on page 12 about our Sri Lankan member for more freebies.

Significant RAN events - update

In our last issue a preliminary checklist of significant events involving serious damage and/or loss of life appeared. That relating to a collision between aircraft carrier HMAS *Melbourne* and destroyer USS *Frank E. Evans* occurred on 3 June 1969 in the South China Sea, during the Vietnam war. Tom Frame in his 1992 book *Pacific Partners: A history of Australian - American naval relations* provides an Australian perspective of the incident (pp.126-132). The ships were engaged in night exercises and *Melbourne* had been maintaining a steady course as the destroyer passed off to port then turned in an arc to cut across the carrier's bows. At the last moment both vessels changed direction with the result the carrier ran over the top of the destroyer. The *Melbourne* was travelling at 18 knots (33kph) and the *Evans* 22. (40kph). Seventy-four American sailors perished, many apparently going down with the forward bow section of their ship which was sliced off. The Americans later awarded a unit citation to the carrier's Wessex helicopter squadron (HS18) for its role in rescuing survivors.

According to Frame the subsequent joint RAN/US enquiry attracted substantial criticism, both from the media and from within the RAN. The head of the enquiry was the American admiral who commanded the squadron which included *Evans*. Australian witnesses found themselves being subjected to aggressive questioning which was interpreted as being part of a strategy to try and reduce the culpability of the destroyer captain. The Australians felt the blame for the incident was entirely due to American incompetence. In August 1969 *Melbourne's* captain was court-martialled by the RAN; and acquitted. Three officers from *Evans* were court martialled by the USN. Two lieutenants pleaded guilty as charged and were relegated to lower positions on the promotions list. The *Evans* skipper was found guilty of dereliction of duty and negligently hazarding his ship, which brought him a reprimand.

In summary Frame writes that the incident became controversial when it appeared some members of the Australian Naval Board were colluding with several senior US officers to achieve the least damaging outcome for the US Navy. The badly managed aftermath of the collision called into question the institutional honesty and integrity of the US Navy, and soured naval relations between the two countries (p.132).

Frame's book (pp.121-125) also provides insight into another controversial incident which occurred during the Vietnam war near the DMZ when when a USAF Phantom fired three Sparrow "air to air" missiles into HMAS *Hobart* during two passes on 17 June 1968. The aircraft had its "friend or foe" transponder turned off and attacked as *Hobart* was trying to confirm

its identity. The missiles killed two sailors and injured at least five others. Initially the identity of the aircraft was a mystery, but examination of missile fragments revealed they were of US origin. The incident received little publicity in Australia and surprisingly the RAN did not convene its own inquiry, preferring instead to rely on the findings of an American investigation which found the aircraft had flown out of a US base in Thailand. According to an unreferenced US report quoted by Frame, (p.124) the main conclusions reached were that the aircraft had reacted positively to a reported enemy air threat; that it's radar had difficulty in differentiating between air and surface targets at low altitudes; and that inadequate coordination between the two allies contributed to the attack. The Americans were not pressed by Australia for compensation or repair costs, apparently in the interests of preserving US/Australian naval relations.

Those of us who were in that neck of the woods in those days might recall the common service-slang saying which originated from the Americans and was applied to adverse outcomes for just about every situation, "Sorry 'bout that." Of course thirty years have now expired, so some members might be interested in looking into the matter more in the archives. Further insight can be gleaned from the RAN's official history of the period, which has recently been published by Alan and Unwin: Grey, Jeffry. (1998). *Up top. the RAN and South East Asian conflict 1555-1972.* $60. Look up the spin-term "friendly fire" in the index to find the missile incident.

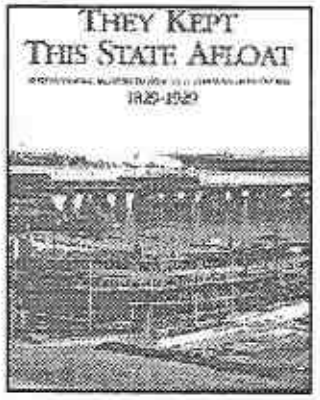
Then there is the event involving a collision between HMAS *Wallaroo* and a US Liberty ship *Henry Gilbert Costin* with tragic consequences off the coast of WA on 11/6/1942. Frame missed this in his 1992 book, however in the December *Newsletter* there will be an essay by a guest writer with substantial knowledge of the incident.

Incidentally Frame's *HMAS Sydney, Loss and Controversy* has just been reprinted in paperback, presumably to take advantage of the tremendous interest in the Joint Parliamentary Inquiry. The 1993 hard cover version was remaindered a few years back and this editor bought his copy at K Mart for $3. The paperback version is about $25. Paul Weaver.

History of Fremantle Port by AAMH president receives acclaim

A Community Enterprise: The history of the Port of Fremantle, 1897 to 1997 by AAMH president Dr Malcolm Tull was launched in the reception area of the Fremantle Port Authority on the evening of 17 June by one of our founding members Professor Frank Broeze. The history has been developed from Malcom's 1985 doctoral thesis and now in its published format it takes it's place alongside the prestigious series published in Canada by the International Maritime Economic History Association. The history is important because it can be viewed in a global context as a classic study of evolutionary port management. A large number of people were present, which was indicative of the wide interest the book has generated in the waterfront industry. Deserving of congratulations too is the Fremantle Port Authority, which financed the publication of the work. The 334 page illustrated book has a retail price of $25 and is available direct from the Fremantle Port Authority, PO Box 95, Fremantle, 0160. Phone 08 9430 4911.

Yet another member's book is published



AAMH member Rod Dixon spends his working days on a liquid natural gas tanker travelling back and forth on SS *Northwest Stormpetrel* between Withnell Bay on the northwest coast of WA near Karratha to any one of ten ports in Japan. In early July he was sitting atop 115,000 tons of liquid gas bound for Tokyo Electric at Sodegaura, in Tokyo Bay. Once upon-a-time sailors used to build model ships and things out of spent matches but not for Ron. Instead he has devoted his spare time on board writing a book about WA shipwrights between 1829 and 1929. *They Kept This State Afloat Shipbuilders, Boatbuilders and Shipwrights of WA* is a hardcover book with over 300 pages and more than 200 photographs and other illustrations. The publisher is Hesperian Press in Victoria Park, WA and retail price is A$45 plus postage.

Bounty bar being lifted

As you read this an intrepid group of Australians have begun what is believed to be the first excavation of the wreck of HMS *Bounty* on the British Territory of Pitcairn Island. Led by former WA archaeologist, now resident at James Cook University in Queensland, Professor Peter Veth and about ten others from around Australia, including Jon Carpenter, senior conservator from the WA Maritime Museum will undertake an examination of the wreck site, which lies under about 10 metres of water on a surf line. Terrestrial sites will also be examined and some anthropological work will take place amongst the 50 or so residents. Reportedly, permission for the expedition has required some intensive negotiation with the isolated islanders. The project has sponsorship from the National Geographic Society and The National Centre of Excellence for Maritime Archaeology, which is based in Fremantle. For collectors of printed material on *Bounty* and its classic history,

interesting articles appeared in *The Australian* 16/7/1998:11 and *The West Australian* 24/7/98:3.

Ian Nicolson - prolific maritime author and member offers discount to members

If you wander into an Australian library and inquire about doing research on a nineteenth century voyage, chances are you will be told to start by checking *Log of Logs*, by Ian Nicholson, an AAMH member. Australian historians will forever owe a debt of gratitude to the small band of dedicated people like Ian who have spent countless hours collating such information for ready reference by others. Recently the editor wrote to Ian requesting a list of his other publications in the Roebuck series and was pleasantly surprised to receive a generous offer of a 20% discount to AAMH members. These are soft-cover books. Remember to subtract 20% from the prices below. Send your orders direct to Ian at 18 Wunnonga Cres. Yaroomba, Qld. 4573. Include A$6 postage for every one to three books. Overseas members should contact Ian direct for postal charges.

No 26 *Gazetteer of Sydney Shipping 1788-1840.* $17.50

No 33 *Shipping Arrivals and Departures Tasmania*, Vol. 2. *1834-42, and gazeteer of Tas. ports 1803-42.* (Vol 1 out of print). $20.

No 34 *Shipping Arrivals and Departures, Sydney*, Vol. 3. *1841-44 and gazeteer.* (Co-authored by G. Broxam). $20.

No 36 *Ships Employed in the South Seas Trade, 1775-1861.* Vol. 1, by AGE Jones. (Nicholson Ed.) $20.

No 47 *Log of Logs* Vol 2. Relating to Aust., NZ and surrounding waters since 1788. $50. (casebound $60)

No 48 *Via Torres Strait.* A history of the Barrier Reef, Coral Sea and Torres Strait Shipping routes. $45.

Broome's last lugger lost

Billed as the Pearl Coast's last original pearling lugger, the two masted *Cornelius* broke it's mooring at Gantheaume Bay during a storm on 18 June and was pounded to pieces on the southern end of Cable Beach. According to Mairi Barton who wrote a piece for *The West Australian* 23 /6/98 p.3; *Cornelius* was built in 1954 for Arthur Streeter and Kim Male, who at the time operated a Broome store, as well as other other luggers. In 1960 it was sold to owners of a Derby cattle station who used it for a while as a supply vessel. Unfortunately it ended up half submerged in a creek, but was salvaged by the original owners and resumed service in the pearling industry. The lugger underwent restoration in Queensland during the 1970s, and was acquired by new owners during the 1990s and converted for tourist cruises. Returning to Broome it became an important asset to the local tourist infrastructure. The newspaper article was accompanied by three photographs, one of *Cornelius* under sail, and two of the wreckage.

HMAS *Westralia* inquiry

In June the inquiry into the 5 May fire on HMAS *Westralia* focussed much of its attention on the suppliers and installers of new flexible hose couplings on the ship's engines shortly before the incident. It was alleged that the couplings did not comply with specifications, and that pulse dampening devices were not fitted, as allegedly had been recommended by the engine's manufacturers. A claim was made that rapid pulses caused excessive flexing and subsequent fatigue cracks in the outer stainless steel braid, this in turn enabled the inner teflon core to burst through, with a resultant spray of fuel which ignited.

Some may feel the *Westralia* inquiry may go down in history as being the most thorough yet undertaken in the Services. Nevertheless, there has been dissatisfaction outside navy circles. A report in *The West Australian* (2/7/98:28), "Westralia probe head lashes out." said that a lawyer had caused indignation within the Navy when criticism was raised about conduct of procedures in a letter to the Inquiry's head, Commodore Lamacraft. Some strong criticisms were also made by others appearing about various Navy procedures leading up to the incident, including levels of proficiency in training. The last day of hearings from witnesses was on Wednesday 8 July. Final summations were presented the following week then the panel retired to consider them. While this was happening, in early August a complaint by civilian contractor Australian Defence Industries about the manner in which the Inquiry was run was submitted to the ongoing Joint Parliamentary Inquiry into Military Justice Procedures in the Australian Defence Force. In addition several reports appeared in various media including the ABC in late August that next-of-kin were distressed at a delay in handing over of personal belongings. The delay was apparently related to probate. The Inquiry's report was delivered to navy heads towards the end of August. They will decide if further action is required. The report's contents are not yet in the public domain.

Inquiry into Military Justice Procedures gazoncked

The submissions to the Inquiry into Military Justice Procedures (IMJP) in the Australian Defence Force continue to reveal much unhappiness with the way things have been done in the past, not only with the navy, but also the army and air force. Volume 5 of written submissions was published at the end of August, as were the Hansard transcripts for Sydney and Brisbane hearings. Volume 5 contains several submissions from persons, including the commanding officer involved with the *Otama* incident, when on 3 August 1987 two sailors were left outside and perished after the boat dived off NSW. The IMJP was dissolved on 30 Aug when Prime Minister Howard declared the election date. Whether it is restarted will depend on the

wishes of the new government.

Beagle book, look, look!

From a member: Having read with interest Martin Syme's letter 'Worthy new Cook book on the stands,' (June Newsletter) my reaction was 'Bravo Martin.' Your footnote stated that to mention a member's book the onus is on the author or his agent to communicate the publication effectively. However, even if a member does everything right and put the AAMH on the publisher's review-copy mailing list, a review is not always forthcoming. (Or is there a hidden agenda allowing a member only a certain number of reviews each decade?) My book *Captain Cook's Endeavour*, published 1995 in England, United States and Germany, has been reviewed all around the world, therefore copies went to all journals on Conway's mailing list, but the country where it was conceived is still keeping silent. This is even more curious as it was an article I wrote April 1986 for *The Great Circle*, 'Do we really Know the Endeavour?' which spurred not only in the interim council of the planned ANMM the idea of creating a replica, but triggered also my believe that this theme had to be pursued even further. Result: my book *Captain Cook's Endeavour*. To let you know what reviewers outside Australia think of it, I add two reviews from Canada and the United States for your information. (Not reproduced. Ed.)

Another book for the same Conway Martin Press series *Anatomy of the Ship* I completed last year and it was published in London, November 1997. I hope that this will receive a little more attention in the newsletter or *The Great Circle*. The title of this book is *HMS Beagle, Survey ship extraordinary*. It has a similar layout to the *Endeavour* book and brings another famous ship back to life. A ship famous for all the wrong reasons. Not for mapping the southern tip of South America for nearly ten years and the most isolated white spots on the Australian chart for another seven, a feat unsurpassed by any other ship and deserving in itself a place in the Parthenon of history-making ships. No, it was for taking a young supernumerary gentleman around the world, taken aboard at a whim of Commander Robert Fitzroy to relieve the officers of his ship from their expected duty of collecting geological as well as flora and fauna samples from not so well known places visited. A gentleman who, after publishing his findings, changed our thoughts on evolution, Charles Darwin.

These two ships, HMS *Endeavour* and HMS *Beagle* belong to the handful of ships most important to Australia's history. Two ships, always interpreted in a doubtful way; one rebuilt thousands of times as a miniature replica and the other only famous by name without a good model in any museum around the world until my project was completed. The reason, lack of reconstruction drawings. Drawings are now available in in my book and the model I constructed to illustrate the book is now part of the collection of the Deutsche Schiffahrtsmuseum at Bremerhaven. One should think the AAMH would not ignore books of this nature, or am I in error? **Karl Heinz Marquardt.** Montrose, Victoria.

Newsletter editor's response: Until I received Mr Marquardt's letter I had not heard of his books, and neither has Dr Henning, Editor of *The Great Circle*. Readers can be assured there is no "hidden agenda" on how often an author can be reviewed in the journal. The reasons why a book review in *The Great Circle* is delayed can be many fold. Firstly the book has to be sent to its Editor, hopefully with some letter of explanation. Then finding a suitable reviewer can pose problems, and due to any number of unforeseen circumstances not all reviewers may react as expediently as could be hoped. Illness, work commitments and domestic situations can all come into play. Importantly if any author has concerns or doubts about why their work has not been reviewed, a polite enquiry to Dr Henning will quickly resolve the issue. His address is, Department of Economic History, University of New England, Armidale. NSW. 2351.

It is important to realise too that the AAMH Newsletter and our flagship journal *The Great Circle* are each published as separate entities, and each with a differing editorial philosophy. The journal is refereed with traditionally demanding scholarly standards. The *Quarterly Newsletter* is a forum for news, comment and opinion on matters involving maritime history. Contributions are always encouraged and they may be controversial. No political censorship is imposed, nor are distasteful matters forbidden. Views expressed within the newsletter do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Association for Maritime History. Generally, scholarly books are not 'reviewed' in the newsletter, but provided space is available I am always happy to publicise the launching of any member's book or project when I learn about them.

More hot water for the editor

The Executive Committee has received complaints from two persons about the last Newsletter and its editor.

Dr Kevin Fewster, Director of Sydney's Australian National Maritime Museum complained that he was becoming more and more agitated each time an issue arrives and he tries to read it. He said most of the stories seemed to relate only to Western Australia and hypothesised that this might be in retaliation for what he believed was a usual eastern bias in most Australian media. He objected to the inclusion of material which drew upon newspaper reports. He said that under the current editor, the Newsletter compared poorly with what was produced some years ago by the late Vaughan Evans. He did not think it was adding much to our knowledge. Dr Fewster wondered if the Newsletter should be terminated and that this would allow subscription fees to be lowered, or an increase delayed. Better to concentrate on *The Great Circle* and organising events, conferences etc.

Serving RAN officer Commander James Goldrick was moved to complain from Canberra about the Exmouth article and

particularly criticised the quoting of Dr Desmond Ball without reference to "other material" which he did not identify. He was also offended by the checklist of RAN incidents, and said the remark "human error" was wholly inappropriate to the loss of HMA ships *Parramatta*, *Perth* and *Yarra*. The Nelson's eye "filler" was also criticised because it did not acknowledge previous researchers' work on Nelson's eye. Equally upsetting for Commander Goldrick was the article about Captain Phillip, which readers will recall, described him as a "perforated pale Pommy."

The Executive Committee unanimously rejected the complaints and declared its continuing support for the Newsletter editor. Letters of support were also received from interstate Executive, and other members.

A third letter has subsequently turned up from Commander Susan Jones, Director of Navy Public Information in Canberra. An unnamed person had sent the issue to her and she complained she discovered "numerous errors, misleading statements and unsupported assertions within the generally negative and condescending statements concerning the RAN." She too did not believe it was appropriate for the AAMH to draw material from the variety of emotive and often mistaken media reports. She said, "the Navy maintained a policy of openness and transparency, and welcomed inquiries that lead to factual publication, and more importantly, promoted the assurance that the Navy is a responsible and caring organisation which acts responsibly and openly, in good times and bad." She added, "Such cooperation would assist and comfort the relatives and friends of our Navy family, past and present, rather than cause them further distress and uncertainty."

Newsletter editor's response: On the matter of "human error", I believe it can be found as an element in one form or another in every catastrophe, not just those experienced by the RAN. Misjudgment and underestimation, ignorance, arrogance, poor management decisions, inadequate training and even tardiness unfortunately inflict every aspect of the human experience.

In regard to the content of the newsletter, most members would realise that under my hand there has been a departure from a more conservative editorial style in the past and for that I make no apologies. Many applaud it, and their letters received over time are on file. Clearly the Australian Association for Maritime History does not, and should not cater solely to institutional academics in ivory towers. There are certainly differing ways in which history can be interpreted, and reported. The variety of articles I pen for this newsletter so apparently lightly, are intended to stimulate broader interest and deeper exploration of subjects by others. Hopefully the inadequacies of any material which appears in the newsletter will always spur others to provide a positive contribution of their own. Unfortunately none of the complainants contacted me beforehand about any concerns, nor have they offered any contributions since I have been editor. I recall that previously the newsletter was produced from within Dr Fewster's organisation, and I took on the task in 1996 by default when there were difficulties with deadlines. As for the internet; been there, done that.

The Australian Association for Maritime History has the distinction of being a totally independent organisation of scholars and all of its office bearers act in an honorary capacity. The AAMH has not increased its subscription rate for several years, due in no small part to the judicious management of a relatively substantial reserve of income-earning funds held in trust. From time to time it uses a portion of these funds to sponsor conferences and other visiting scholars. Occasionally it assists with seed-capital for publication of a book relating to Australian maritime history; but to avoid plundering, now usually limits these occasional conditional grants to $500 or less. The AAMH with its various executive teams over time can be proud they have maintained these financial reserves.

A remarkable aspect about the philosophy of AAMH is that every five years the Executive responsibilities transfer to another state. It is expected that next year (1999) this role, including production of the *Quarterly Newsletter* will be entrusted to a new Executive Committee in South Australia. We in the west will continue as a state branch and concentrate on serving the local membership.

Onslow people disappointed

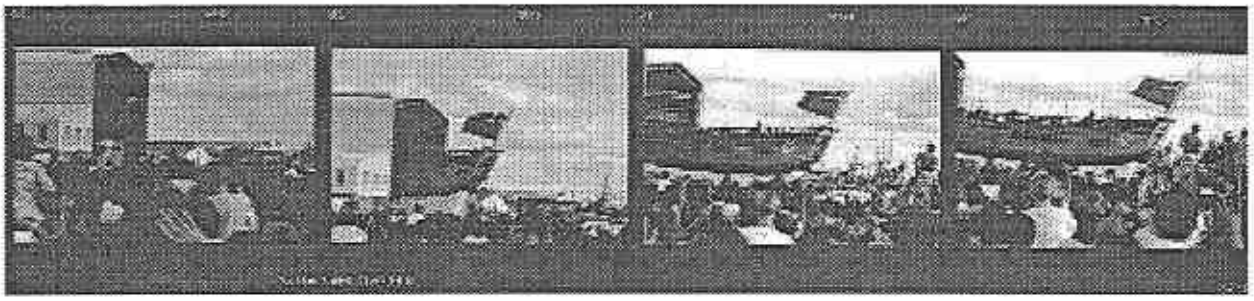
Defence Minister Bronwyn Bishop has refused permission for the 2,070 ton Oberon-class submarine HMAS *Onslow* to visit the Pilbara port of the same name before it is decommissioned early next year. As a result the locals feel the navy has missed an excellent public relations opportunity with the peoples of northwest Australia. The sub last called there in 1995 and will be too busy to call again. It will be doing something in Hawaii until September then back to Australia for some exercises off the east coast. It will then visit it's home port at Eden before going to HMAS *Platypus* to be prepared for ceremonial handing over to the Australian National Maritime Museum in Sydney. Onslow Port was named in 1885 after a WA Chief Justice, Sir Alexander Onslow. The sub was built in Scotland then commissioned in 1969. It was named after the WA port.

New book on WW2 navy business launched

Between 1942 and 1945 RAN sailors served with the 1st Australian Beach Group AIF in the Netherlands East Indies and Borneo. A book, *Sailor and Commando* describing their training and activities has been written by A.E. Jones and was published by Hesperian Press, Victoria Park (WA) in July. The author's interest in the subject is ongoing and he would be pleased to hear from families of any men who served with the group. His phone number is 08 9417 8472.

A look back to 1993, and forward to 1999

Karl Marquardt's letter prompted a rummage in the Editor's negative file and produced the strip shown below of the *Endeavour* replica being launched. It was a very exciting afternoon, the likes of which haven't been seen since. The word is that the team working on the *Duyfken* replica are aiming for a launch date on Australia Day, 1999. That will whip up another big crowd. Why not come to Freo and join in the fun next year.



Bargain book offer gets humungous response

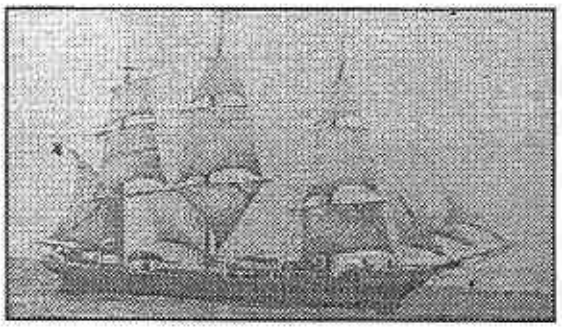
In our last issue we offered to members, *Ships employed in the South-seas trade: 1775-1859* vol.2. by Jones A.G.E.(ND) for $20, post included. As an added bonus with each order we included a copy of the AAMH listing of theses relating to maritime history as long as stocks held out. Wow, what a reaction, every day for the next couple of weeks the letter box was stuffed with cheques. (Makes a change from bills.) We still have a few more copies for members in Australia at $20 posted but overseas post prices have gone through the roof, for example the cheapest rate to NZ was A$23. Past orders from overseas have been sent, but if there any more orders from overseas, please contact the newsletter editor first for a postage price (at cost). The address is Dr Paul Weaver, 23 Waddell Rd. Palmyra. Western Australia. 6157.

Joshua Slocum centenary

Yep it's hundred years since Joshua Slocum completed his solo circumnavigation in the *Spray*, seemingly forever to inspire countless yachtsmen to emulate his travels. He made his Australian landfall in October 1896, at Newcastle where he was greeted by the American Consul. After resting up for a few days Slocum sailed down to Sydney and took up temporary residence at the Johnston's Bay Flying Squadron yacht club. After a degree of social activity he departed for Melbourne, arriving there 22 December. More socialising then it was off to the Apple Isle for more of the same. *Spray* was given a refit at Devonport and then on 16 April 1897 the lone sailor departed for Torres Strait, calling at various places en route including Sydney and Cooktown. A detailed description of Slocum, the *Spray*, and their Australian adventures is to be had in *Capt. Joshua Slocum: The adventures of America's Best Known Sailor*. (1977 ed.) by his son, Victor Slocum. (first published 1950)

Extracting the digit - photo enhancement of a rare image

The photograph alongside is probably the last ever taken of the *Joseph Conrad*, which sailed from Port Philip Bay in November 1935. Reportedly it vanished at sea with the loss of all hands. The picture was taken by Mr Ern Ryding with a box camera when he was a rating on HMAS *Tattoo*. On the original photograph the ship is about 1 cm long. It has been enlarged and digitally enhanced here. On the computer screen it is possible to distinguish people on the deck.



Mrs Bishop discovers old sub find

Defence Industry Minister Bishop waxed enthusiastic towards the end of July over the discovery of Australian submarine AE2 scuttled by the Navy off Turkey in 1915 after a two hour battle in the Sea of Memora. A Turkish gunboat shot some holes in its stern when it poked up a bit too high. There were no casualties, but skipper Lt. Commander Henry Stoker and his 20 crew became Turkish POWs. Press reports attributing the discovery of the sub to Turkish divers appeared in Australian newspapers on 23 and 24 July 1998. In fact the AE2 had been discovered by an Australian/Turkish team of divers last year, and was reported in Australian dive magazines then. An Australian-Turkish team is preparing to dive on the wreck again in September. John White, a senior curator at the Australian War Memorial told ABC's AM programme on 24 July that the Turkish

authorities were interested in raising the AE2 and putting it on public display near Gallipoli.

More on Exmouth facility

From a member: No doubt by this time, a number of RAN types will have leapt on Martin Syme's error in his letter about Ray Parkin. HMAS *Perth* was, of course sunk off Java, not in the Coral Sea actions.
I was very interested to read the article about the North West Cape communications station. In another previous life, I was a Radio Officer working for AWA in the *1950s* on coastal and deep sea vessels. I think a small gremlin got into the text on page 3, as the VLF frequency used by the USN would have been 22.3 kilohertz (called in my prehistoric times kilocycles), as 22.3 megahertz would put the signal in the High Frequency band. I noted with particular interest that in 1975 the RAN began to use the Exmouth facility. I recall with fond memories the GBMS (Great Britain Merchant Ships) system of world wide communications which we used in the '50s. I imagine that system has now disappeared, but the "Area" scheme, as it was generally known by "Sparkies" of the day, enabled the Admiralty to communicate with British registered ships all over the world by using naval transmitters for commercial traffic, on specially allocated frequencies, in parallel with naval traffic. In our area, the one-way outward merchant radio traffic was handled by Overseas Telecommunications Commission's Sydney radio (VIS) keying the naval transmitters at Belconnen in the ACT using the call sign VIX, at the beginning of each watch period. Incidentally, one of the frequencies used was 44 kilohertz (cycles), which gave a very good signal over most coastal areas in Australia. On many occasions, the RN and RAN watchkeepers at Darwin (VUM), Singapore (GYL) and Hong Kong (GZO) would accept traffic from us merchant types when, as often happened, it was impossible (usually for skip distance and other ionospheric reasons) to raise Sydney on HF from areas in the South Pacific and Indian Oceans. I was on the Kurnell to Sumatra tanker-run for a while and also did one coal carrying trip to Japan in an ANL ship, as well as in liner trade in Eastern & Australian's SS *Eastern*. Many times I was personally extremely grateful for the assistance of the Navy stations in clearing urgent traffic back to Australia. (Our efforts to engage the WRAN radio operators at VHM in any kind of social chit chat or to schedule future assignations were invariably met with businesslike and cold responses!)
With reference to *Krait* and Exmouth, Z Force is not the correct term to use, although I realise that most popular references to any activity by any branch of the Allied Intelligence Bureau 1942-45 tend to use that incorrect form. Z Special Unit of the Australian Army was set up in 1942 as an administrative device to "hold" Army personnel who were originally attached to the Inter-Allied Services Department, the name of the Australian arm of the British Special Operation Executive (SOE). Z Unit continued in that role to hold on its establishment those Army personnel who remained in ISD's successor-Special Operations Australia (SOA), whose cover name was Services Reconnaissance Department (SRD). When in 1943, SRD's role and area of responsibility changed primarily to operations in Indonesia and Malaysia (to use present-day terms), M Special Unit was similarly created to cope with Australian personnel from all services who were attached to the other branches of AIB. (Refer Alan Powell. *War by Stealth.* Melbourne university Press, 1996, for all the rather bewildering details). *Krait* was used in the Jaywick operation and subsequently from Darwin in other clandestine expeditions, but Jaywick (1943) and Rimau (1944 and RN Submarine transported) were both SRD Operations. **Paul D. Wilson. Qld.**

Footnote: *Krait* is still afloat, and is with Sydney's National Maritime Museum, taking boatloads of school children and tourists for rides on the Harbour. The boat was found working in the timber industry in Borneo by two former special operatives during the 1980s. Two excellent models of *Krait* are known, one in NSW and one in WA. The most authentic would appear to be one in WA built by Mr Brian Lemon. He used the same plans as the the NSW version, but also consulted with several men who had been involved with the war time operations to determine details of various specialised modifications when the vessel went into clandestine service. Because of it's significant links to WA, the original vessel surely would be an excellent attraction to the proposed new WA Maritime Museum facilities at Fremantle. More on *Krait* in December.. Paul Weaver.

NZ conference a spectacular success

From a member: *Half a World Away* was the third maritime history conference held in New Zealand in recent years. Ken Scaddon of the Wellington Maritime Museum started the ball rolling. Ian Farquhar and his colleagues in Dunedin picked it up and kept it rolling. At the close of that conference I volunteered that Bill Laxon and I would organise one in Auckland. As it happened, Richard Cassells, then director of the New Zealand National Maritime Museum, was keen to become involved. The British Council's Link programme, celebrating its 50th anniversary in New Zealand, saw a maritime heritage conference as an appropriate addition to its programme. At the Royal New Zealand Naval Museum its director, Peter Dennerly, was looking at commemorating the 50th anniversary of the end of the First World War. The result was that we all got together.

Melding together a diversity of interests which ranged from yachting to naval matters to economic history to shipwatching and boat-bothering looked difficult to start with, but came together remarkably well. The wide variety of subject matter enticed a much larger gathering than would have been the case if the fare offered had been more limited, yet not one of the participants - so far as I'm aware - had any complaint about sitting through papers of perhaps marginal interest before receiving a wake-up call from something nearer and dearer to his or her heart.

It was a spectacularly successful conference, and has some lessons not only in selecting the subject manner for future conferences, but in viewing maritime history generally. No specialist topic is of great interest to more than a few people, and perhaps not of much importance either, unless put in context, and even that frequently depends on the eye of the beholder.

The subject matter of *Half a World Away* was plaited together from three skeins: commercial shipping, naval affairs, and the development of a maritime Auckland. As the conference developed the subject matter built a relationship, one paper with another, one theme leading to another, one time leading to the next. Topics which at first glance might not seem to sit well together, did so, complementing each other.

Naval affairs began with Roger Knight's *Acheron* survey, moved to Margerette Lincoln's view of the Navy in society, and on through Richard Taylor's Waikato War, Eric Grove's account of the Navy's introduction to steam, Cohn White's Victorian sailor, Peter Dennerly's analysis of New Zealand's part in the 1914-18 war, John Tonkin-Covell's look at Naval Intelligence in the 1939-45 war, and Ian McGibbon's overview of the Navy in the South Pacific. It had a continuity about it, with New Zealand and Pacific affairs in the foreground, painted against a backdrop provided by some of the speakers visiting from the UK as a result of the Link programme.

The commercial part, a mixture of social and economic history, began with Michael Stammer's account of emigration, followed by Cliff Hawkins talking on the scows he's loved and recorded for more than sixty years. Ian Farquhar moved us from sail to steam in the UK-NZ trade, and Bill Laxon took that trade through to 1940. Bill and I skipped lightly over the coastal trade to the north of Auckland, I had a look at the South Pacific, particularly in more recent times, and Tony Boyle rounded off with a steely-eyed look at the economics of shipping now.

The Auckland connection was made in a variety of ways. Some of Michael Stammers' emigrants went to Auckland. The Waikato war was waged from Auckland and Onehunga. The scows were Auckland's workhorses until they wore out. Auckland continued flowing through Bill Laxon's and my account of the Roadless North. The South Pacific trade was - and is - based on Auckland. The two yachting papers, Harold Kidd and Robin Elliott's account of the period 1840-1960 and Alan Sefton's view of the years from 1960 to the America's Cup, completed the menu.

The period covered ran from the early days of European settlement in in New Zealand to the present time. The inclusion of current events in several papers - the South Seas Trade, Break Bulk to Containers and the second yachting paper - underline the fact that history is not something that happened a long, long time ago. Connecting historical events with what is happening now is every bit as important as putting events into context in their own time. After all, history covers everything that happened before the moment you read this sentence. Your opening of this book and your decision to read the introduction are already events of history, albeit minor ones.

An omission, perhaps, was the Maori connection with New Zealand's maritime development, both before and after the arrival of Europeans, at least so far as the Auckland theme is concerned. The primary theme of the conference was, however, to look at the United Kingdom-New Zealand link, both naval and commercial, hence the title. The link programme allowed us to invite a number of speakers from the United Kingdom, thereby enlarging the scope of the topics being considered and allowing us to hear other than an Antipodean view of things.

The financial good health of the conference was made possible by the support of three sponsors: the New Zealand National Maritime Museum, the Royal New Zealand Navy and the Naval Museum, and the British Council's Link programme. The organising committee's affairs were kept in good order by Richard Cassell's assistant, Rochelle Sloan.
David Johnson, Auckland.

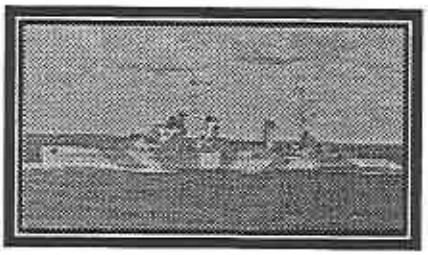
David Johnson, one of our NZ members, is a prolific writer with 13 books published on maritime subjects, and four more in the pipeline. Recently (1996)*Wellington Harbour* was a substantial volume relating to the history of of the harbour from its earliest days. Richly illustrated with many historical images gathered from far and wide, the reproduction quality of them and indeed the whole book can only be described as superb. Of similar attention to detail is his latest volume, which came out in August. *Star Ferry: The Story of a Hong Kong Icon* would seem to be proof that life and business in Hong Kong has been unfazed since the departure of the British last year. Most former visitors to the Pearl of the Orient would remember the green ferries, which David has revealed, have a rich history going back to the 1870s. Currently there are 12 ferries shuttling back and forth to Kowloon and other places. David has included many images, both historical and modern in his book, and few would be able to fault his own excellent photographic talents. This beautiful volume can be purchased at Star Ferry offices, but Distribution outside Hong Kong is uncertain at the moment. Enquiries on this and his earlier works can be directed to, David Johnson, PO Box 18250; Glen Innes, Auckland 6, New Zealand.

HMAS *Sydney* Inquiry - a major task almost, but not quite over

Researcher Mr John Doohan presenting hi submission to the HMAS *Sydney* Joint Parliamentary Inquiry. L-R Senator J MacDonald, Mr N. Dondas MP, Mr W.L. Taylor MP, Mrs J. Towner (secretary), Senator D Margetts. Photo: P. Weaver

The Parliamentary Inquiry into circumstances involving the loss of HMAS *Sydney*, which commenced late last year was long running and involved many people. Unfortunately completion was nipped in the bud when the 38th parliament was dissolved on 30 August. The parliamentary committee may be reconvened after the election, depending on the will of the new government.

Understandably this state of affairs has caused distress and anger in many quarters, and possibly relief in others. Regardless, the project has provided future historians with an enormous quantity of material which otherwise probably would have been impossible to assemble. Eighteen volumes of submissions and five sets of Hansard transcripts were published. Eighteen submissions were in the process of being approved but these will not enter the public domain unless the committee is re-established.



HMAS Sydney

The Defence Sub-Committee sat in most capital cities, and the makeup at these varied, depending on the availability of members. For example in Perth, the hearing on 17 April was presided over by ex-RAN officer Mr W. L. Taylor MP because the chairman Senator MacGibbon was overseas. The last date for written submissions was extended to 30th June, and supplementary submissions were accepted until 24 July. In all about 350 persons and organisations were on the mailing list, far in excess of the usual interest expressed in parliamentary enquiries. They will all receive a letter of explanation, and a list of the submissions not published. PW.

Carnarvon Jetty saved by big local effort

The 1.6 km long timber jetty at Carnarvon was reopened in mid-July after being closed for four years because it was deemed unsafe by the WA Department of Transport, which also earmarked $390,000 to demolish it. The jetty is an important tourist attraction and its loss would have been a severe blow to the town. It is slightly shorter than one still standing at Busselton. Built mostly of valuable jarrah, the demolition would have been welcomed by the multi-million dollar timber salvage industry, but this was not to be. With the financial assistance of the Gascoyne Development Commission, local volunteers have made the jetty safe enough to be reopened, and will be replacing about 200 piles over the next five years at an estimated cost of $800,000. The first 40 piles were due to be delivered in August.

The jetty was first opened in 1897, having been built under contract by Victorian born, but Cue (WA) pastoralist Matthew Price. It was used by the WA State Shipping Service until 1965, but ships carrying petroleum fuels for the Gascoyne region continued to use it into the 1980s. Price also built a jetty at Geraldton and extensions to the Robb's Jetty at the South Fremantle Abattoirs. Another of his significant contracts was for the erection of the Albany to Eucla telegraph line. A report by George Boylen in The *West Australian* 8/7/1998:34 said that he landed shipments of metal telegraph poles on beaches along the southern coast. He also had a pearling fleet at Cossack, near Roebourne which was wiped out by a cyclone. But there is more; he also sold horses to Mauritius, and at one time was marooned on an island. Price's father, who was related to Italian royalty arrived in Victoria from New Zealand during the nineteenth century. Hmm, what's the bet there will soon be a book about this bloke?

Recently released archival records

Australian Archives in Sydney has recently received the following:

Defence Centre Sydney - Plans of defence properties and buildings in Sydney and on the south coast, 1847 - 1997. (C5034)

Maritime Comand - original large format photographs of Customs House and NSW Collectors of Customs, 1840 - 1910. (C4409-10)

RAN Armament Depot, Kingswood - correspondence files with Newington (NEW) prefix, 1928 - 1997. (C5023)

Australian Archives in Hobart has received:

CSIRO Division of Marine Research index cards for "T" series records which controlled all the agencies files

from 1929 - 1989. (P2744)

First balloon voyage to Australia

American balloonist Steve Fosset's fourth attempt to circle the planet non-stop in *Solo Spirit* came to and end when he ditched in the Coral Sea on 17 August soon after leaving Australia, obliging French, New Zealand and Australian authorities to engage in an urgent search and rescue operation.

He notched up some significant records en route. With the initial launch in Mendoza, Argentina he made the first hot-air balloon crossing of the South Atlantic, passing near Cape Town, South Africa, then made the first such crossing of the Indian Ocean, drifting over the Australian coast near Kalbarri on the evening of 15 August. The balloon then travelled in a sweeping arc, southeast over Coober Pedy then northeast towards Queensland, leaving the continent near Gladstone at dusk on 16 August. A few hours later the balloon encountered a severe thunderstorm and was buffeted by winds and hail. Apparently the gas envelope was compromised and parts set on fire, with the result that the entire contraption plunged into the ocean, concluding the longest balloon flight in history. Fosset inflated a small liferaft and activated an EPERB. A few hours later a French aircraft found him and dropped an extra liferaft. Later an RAAF Hercules took up station and not to be outdone, also dropped a liferaft.

NZ Navy ship *Endeavour*, and tanker *Papuan Chief* converged on the scene however, the actual rescue was undertaken by Australian yachtsman Laurie Piper and his crew on board *Atlanta*. By good fortune they were in the area at the end of a five year global circumnavigation. They later transferred the balloonist to *Endeavour*, which dropped him off in Queensland.

Aside from the Atlantic and Indian Ocean crossing, Fosset became the first person to enter Australian air space by balloon from a foreign country. He was not the first to cross the continent in a balloon. That was done a few years ago by Oz adventurer Dick Smith. (There may also have been a short balloon flight between PNG and Oz by someone).

Oz adventurer prepares for big sea voyage in 1999

Another well known thrill seeker, Australian Hans Tholstop is currently preparing to motor from Darwin to Japan early 1999 in a small boat powered with a 6hp Honda four stroke outboard. For others seeking fame, and honours from governments, the following tasks are suggested: Australia has already been circled by canoe, so that's out, but no one has swum around the continent yet. Be the first to swim or canoe from Oz to NZ, or the first to row from Cape Town to Fremantle. (Maybe that has been done?) How about an underwater crossing from PNG to Australia? Then there could be an attempt to drift from somewhere in Asia to Australia on a bamboo raft to try to prove one of the theories of how Australia was first populated. When this Oz ed was younger in the '60s I walked across N. Africa and solo motor cycled from England to India, amongst other things, so I have some sympathy with others who give it a go. There are heaps of exciting adventures to do to which are not life threatening or extreme. You don't have to be a millionaire, or be attached to some poncy organisation with oodles of money and a plastic image. The key to success is thinking of an idea, undertaking adequate planning, and producing the personal determination to follow through. Go for it, you'll probably be glad you did. A good starting point may be the series of publications by Lonely Planet. These are guides to the most remote parts of the world and many offer information of interest to the maritime historian. They have a free quarterly newsletter which can be picked up at quality book shops or by dropping a line to PO Box 617, Hawthorn, Vic. 3122.

World's fastest sailing vessel is Australian

Watching windsurfers scudding across a stretch of water one could be forgiven for thinking they were the fastest wind-powered devices on water, but not so; that honour belongs to Victorians Lindsay Cunningham and his two aquapilots Simon McKeon and Tim Daddo. The team cracked the world record for sail craft by maintaining 46.52 knots (86.2km) over 500 metres near Wilson's Promontory in 1983. That craft *Yellow Pages Endeavour* which was designed and built by Cunningham has been replaced by *Extreme 50*, which the team expect will crack the sailing world's holy grail this year, the 50 knot barrier. That's pretty fast; and dangerous. The two crew wear crash helmets and crouch in a bubble enclosed cockpit, not unlike a jet fighter. In a report in *The Australian*, (25/6/1998:18). Cunningham said one of their greatest fears was doing a "Donald Campbell," a reference to the fatal conclusion of that British speed king's quest in a jet powered *Bluebird* after it became air-born and flipped on a Scottish Lake. Good luck guys; or should it be as they say in show biz, break a leg?

RAN objects to editorial content of ex-service organisation's newsletter

Some readers may have seen a report in *The Australian* 29/7/1998:3 which reported that the RAN has been so offended by ribald service-orientated jokes printed in the newsletter of the Queensland based Far East Strategic Reserve Association that it has withdrawn permission for the group to have the RAN insignia on its official correspondence. The press article said that one Commodore J.H. McCaffrie, director of general navy corporate management had confirmed the decision. FESRA editor Noel Payne thought the navy was overreacting. His organisation caters for a male membership of 102, all of whom had spent

between six and thirty years in the navy, and all were middle-aged or older. One of the jokes which offended the navy involved a stoker and a brothel. Of course there are lots of jokes about navy stokers, and for that matter, navy officers, who are frequently stereotyped as idiots. Such jokes have been around for a very long time and may be viewed as a legitimate form of social commentary. There is possibly a worthwhile historical study there for someone to take up. Dare one venture to say it would be interesting to know just how many commodores the navy has in Canberra engaged in "improving" the navy's image by attempting to intimidate editors in all walks of media. Navy PR parlance behind the scenes likens these sort of activities to "putting out fires."

Senate probe into ADF interference in civil matters initiated

A report in *The West Australian* 26/6/98:32 said that Defence Minister Ian McLachlan admitted in a written answer to an opposition questions that facilities at Oakleigh Barracks in Victoria had been made available to a company Fynwest to recruit serving soldiers to go to Dubai to be trained in waterfront skills. The Barracks commander had authorised use of the Army facilities and the Minister was aware of the recruitment activity prior to it becoming public knowledge. The scheme was part of the ill-fated attempt to force the Maritime Union of Australia (MUA) off Australian wharves in the early part of 1998. Several ABC news broadcasts in WA on 25/6/1998 revealed that more than half the 54 men who had been involved in "scab" operations at Fremantle had a military background. In June, Greens (WA) Senator Dee Margetts won support for the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs and Trade to examine the Australian Defence Force (ADF) involvement in non-defence matters, and particularly the legal basis on which it relies. The impending election has put this in limbo. The photograph here was taken in April at the height of the Patricks/MUA dispute. With his family in support, MUA member Greg Martin urged all Aboriginal people in the Australian workforce to join a union. Greg originally hails from the Pinjarra (WA) area, where his people experienced the infamous massacre in 1834 under the leadership of the Royal Navy's Governor Stirling. Greg's wife Cheryl (left) is a *Yamatji* woman from the Mt Magnet region of WA.

Sri Lanka member has new book published

Hot of the presses in Sri Lanka is *The Port of Colombo 1940-1996*, by AAMH member, Professor K. Dharmasena. This is the second volume of the author's history of the port, the first dealing with the period 1860-1939, which was published in 1980. Volume 1 was based on his doctoral thesis awarded by the London School of Economics. No doubt Volume 2 will be reviewed in *The Great Circle*, but in the meantime if members would like to purchase a copy they could write to Professor Dharmasena at University of Kelaniya, Kelaniya, Sri Lanka, or fax him on 911391, with the appropriate prefix for that country. The AAMH also has a copy which will be included with a Christmas surprise bundle of goodies to be posted to some lucky member. Simply send a post card from where you live to the newsletter editor by 30 October to be in the draw.

19th century convict ship *Larkins* located in Albany

Albany maritime archaeologist Adam Wolfe and materials conservator Dr Ian Godfrey at the Western Australian Maritime Museum are working on timbers recently recovered from the wreck of 36 metre, 648 ton east Indiaman *Larkins*, which sank in Princess Royal Harbour, Albany in 1876. Built in India in 1808, *Larkins* carried convicts to Oz in 1817, 1829 and 1831. None of these voyages were to WA. It ended its days at Albany as the first coal hulk there to service mail steamers. Dr Godfrey suspects from differing timbers there may be a second vessel on the site, some of these are now under a shoreside car park. (WA 24/8/98:32).

More on oil measurements

From beneath the swaying palm trees on Honiara comes the following letter from one of our members:

I regret my delay in contributing to the discussion in the newsletter on the measurements used by the old sail-whalers, and particularly their use of the word barrel. This latter has been the subject of many discussions in the USA, UK and elsewhere. The basic problem is that "barrel" is a tangible object, a container of undefined volume. Such a barrel may be almost any size, (but apparently was once of a standard volume of one eighth of a tun of 252 imperial gallons.)

The second barrel is an intangible measure of volume, namely 31 1/2 imperial gallons, or one eighth of a tun of 252

imperial gallons. Thus, unfortunately, a large barrel (a container) may contain more than one barrel (by volume) of oil or other substance. (One tun by volume was reputed to be by weight one ton.)

Most whaleships carried oil in big casks of varying size and volume. On the return home, it was the task of the gaugers to determine how much each and every cask, butt or barrel contained, and to express these in terms of a standard barrel measurement of 31 1/2 gallons per tun. For example, to quote Stuart C. Sherman's *The Voice of the Whalemen* (1995 p.55), when the US whaleship *Charles Phelps* returned to Connecticut on 15 January 1850 with 376 casks, the gaugers determined that in total they contained 66,641 gallons or "1,766 and 12/31 1/2 barrels" of whale oil. (The running totals of barrels taken that were often kept throughout a voyage, had to be estimates, and with leakage and evaporation *en route* home, had to be checked more precisely by the skilled gaugers before the owners could pay off the captain, the officers and the crew who required lays or shares in lieu of wages.) I do hope that these comments help with this continuing debate. Keep up your good work. **R. Richards, Honiara, Solomon Islands.**

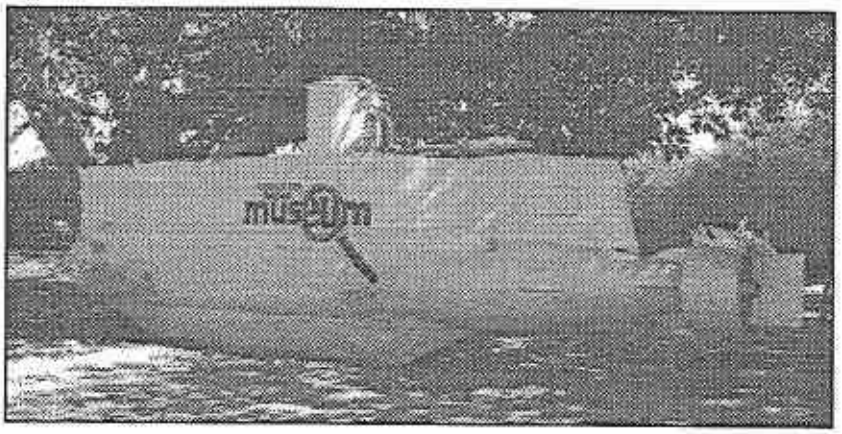
Living on a idyllic Pacific island, but experiencing regular electricity "brownouts," the author in an accompanying letter wondered if the name Palmyra, where the editor lives, had any relationship to Palmyra Island in the same ocean, but distant from where he lives. Palmyra (WA) is named for the ancient city and empire in Syria, ruled over by Odenathus and his wife Zenobia, a beautiful scholar reputedly with some feminist attributes. In AD 273 the Palmyrenians sneered at the visiting Roman Emperor Auralian and gave him the finger from atop the city walls. Alas it was a classic example of human error, but Zenobia who by now was a widow, escaped on a fast camel. She was captured by the Romans crossing the Euphrates in a boat and eventually did a spot of plea-bargaining at the expense of her subjects. The streets of Palmyra (WA) commemorate the names of many people and places from the period. Palmyra Island may have similar naming origins.

Australia's first commercial submarine?

Under a Moreton Bay fig tree in front of the WA Museum's Geraldton building rests a small nameless submarine. Painted bright yellow, perhaps in reference to the famous Beatles' song, *We all live in a yellow submarine*, this interesting device bears testimony to one of the less successful etrepreneurial ventures in WA maritime history.

Constructed by the fishing company M.G. Kailis at the small fishing settlement of Dongara, the sub was transported by road and launched at Geraldton on 6 September 1969. Built to carry a crew of two, the boat was intended for fishing the painted crayfish which are prolific north of Exmouth, but do not usually enter conventionally baited craypots. The idea behind the sub was that it would attract the valuable crustacea with sonic pulses, then suck 'em into an inlet, after which they would be transferred to a mother-ship on the surface. In accordance with the best laid plans of mice and men, it never got beyond some fundamental tests in the barbour. Apparently when the sub dived, hydrogen gas from the bank of batteries became a significant danger to the occupants. After the bold project was abandoned the deathtrap faced an uncertain fate until it was acquired by the WA Museum.

An information leaflet produced by the Museum provides the following technical specifications: Length 8.4m. Tower lid to keel 3m. Beam1.1m. Draught 1.6m. Dispacement 9.35t. The sub had a 138hp petrol motor which could push it along at 18 km/h and a 15hp, 220v electric motor which could move it at 9 km/h. Maximum operating depth was intended to be 37m.



In an octopus's garden by the sea

The *Quarterly Newsletter - The Australian Association for Maritime History* is a forum for news, comment and opinion on matters involving maritime history. Contributions are always welcome. Views expressed within it do not necessarily reflect those of the Australian Association for Maritime History.

The newsletter is compiled and edited in an honorary capacity by **Dr. Paul R. Weaver, 23 Waddell Road, Palmyra, Western Australia 6157.** The next newsletter is expected to be ready for the printer on the last day of November. Material for inclusion should be sent direct to the editor well prior to the deadline. Original articles should carry the author's signature. Enclose a stamped addressed envelope for return of material.